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CHAPTER I.

LOST.

"Well, I guess I'm lost!"

It was well along toward evening of a day in April, of the year 1779. In the midst of a dense forest in the western part of the State of South Carolina stood a bronzed and handsome young man of perhaps twenty years of age. Near at hand, cropping the newly grown grass contentedly was a magnificent black horse, and it was evident that the animal was not bothered by the fact that his master was lost, even if his master was.

The young man in question was Dick Slater, the famous young scout, spy and captain of "The Liberty Boys of '76," and the horse was Major, who had many a time saved his master's life by a show of speed which the British horses could not duplicate.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys" had been sent down into South Carolina to render such aid as they could to the patriot people of the South, as there was no fighting of any moment to be done in the North.

Dick, as was his custom, had ridden ahead that afternoon to get the lay of the land and make sure they were on the right road, and that no British were in the vicinity, but had taken the wrong road at a point several miles back, where the road forked, and had seen the road dwindle to a path, and even this eventually disappeared and he found himself threading the dense forest, where, so it seemed, the foot of man or beast had never tread before. Finding that the horse was not following any path, Dick finally came to a stop in a little opening in the forest and dismounted. It was then that he gave utterance to the remark with which we open the story:

"Well, I guess I'm lost!"

There was no fright or nervousness in the tone of the youth's voice, as would have been the case had he been one unused to life in the woods; Dick was too much of a veteran and too well versed in woodcraft to become very

greatly dismayed by simply losing his way in the forest. It would be unpleasant to be forced to spend the night in the wilderness, of course, but he would get along all right, for he had a blanket and some cold food, and could build a fire to keep the wild animals away.

"Did you hear what I said, Major?" remarked Dick, after a few moments. "I said that we are lost."

Major laid one ear back and rolled his eyes in the direction of his master, but calmly went on with the pleasing work of cropping grass.

"I guess it doesn't worry you much, old fellow!" smiled Dick. "But as for myself, I would much prefer to pass the night where it is more civilized."

In the hope that he might again find the path, Dick walked slowly along, through the timber, leading Major and looking in every direction most carefully and searchingly. He was unsuccessful, however. Nowhere could he see aught that looked like a path.

Suddenly Dick was startled by a shrill scream, in a female voice, followed by the pattering of footsteps, and a girl of perhaps sixteen or seventeen years came running toward him. A crashing sound could be heard back of her and instantly jumping to the conclusion that the girl was pursued by a wild animal of some kind, Dick cocked his musket and stood waiting for a sight of the animal so as to get a shot at it.

"This way, miss!" he cried. "Come on past me and I will protect you."

The girl's eyes had been turned back in an endeavor to get sight of her pursuer, and she had not seen Dick; but as his words fell upon her hearing she gave utterance to a cry of delight, and turned her eyes in his direction.

"It's a panther, sir!" she cried. "You will have to be careful or it will tear you to pieces."

"Have no fear on that score, miss," was the reply; "I will finish the panther if he comes within range of my musket."

The girl ran past Dick and stopped a few yards distant, and just as she came to a stop the panther came in sight.

He was a tawny, fierce-looking beast, and when he saw Dick and the horse he came to a sudden stop and stood glaring at them with eyes of fire.

Dick did not delay an instant. Here was his opportunity, and he raised his musket, took quick but careful aim at the glaring eyes and pulled trigger.

Bang! went the weapon and the panther, with a terrible, snarling squall, leaped high in the air and then came down in a heap. A few struggles and then the animal became still.

"I guess I finished him, miss," said Dick, calmly, and he walked toward where the tawny beast lay.

"Be careful, sir," the girl warned; "he may not be dead yet. He might tear you with his terrible claws."

"I think he is dead," was the reply; but Dick advanced carefully, just the same. It was not the first time he had met the tawny beast in the wild forest, and he well knew that it was best to be careful.

The panther was dead, however. The bullet had entered the right eye and penetrated to the brain, killing the brute almost instantly.

"Yes, he's dead," said Dick, turning toward the girl; "he will never cause any one any more trouble or make way with any more of the settlers' pigs or sheep."

"Oh, I am so glad!" said the girl, with a sigh of relief. "How can I ever thank you enough, sir, for what you have done for me? You have saved my life!"

"No thanks are necessary, miss," said Dick, pleasantly; "I am only too glad that I was able to render you assistance. And but for the fact that you were given a bad scare, I would be glad that the affair happened."

"How is that, sir?" in surprise.

"Well, I'll tell you," was the smiling reply; "I was lost in the forest—am lost yet, so far as that is concerned—and now perhaps you will be kind enough to guide me out of the wilderness."

"Certainly, sir. I shall be very glad to do something in return for what you have done for me, but the matter of guiding you out of the timber will be very slight repayment for the service you rendered me."

"Nevertheless I shall be not only willing, but glad to call it an even thing, miss," smiling.

"Very well; when you are ready I will guide you out of the wilderness."

"I am ready now. But what is your name, miss, if I may be so bold?"

"Lucy Lockhart, sir."

"And my name is Frank Martin." Dick thought it best not to tell his real name, for he was aware that there

were many Tories in this part of the country, and did not know but Lucy's folks might be Tories and have heard of him.

"I am glad to know the name of one who saved my life," the girl said.

"What a beautiful girl she is!" thought Dick. "I feel ashamed of myself for giving her a false name, but I must exercise every caution when in the enemy's country." Aloud he said:

"Do you live near here, Miss Lucy?"

"About two miles from here, Mr. Martin."

"All the way through the timber?"

"No; it is about a mile to the highway, and then a mile up the road."

"Ah, yes; and as it will be sundown by the time we get there, I wonder if I might ask to be allowed to remain over night?"

"Certainly," the girl said; "indeed, uncle and aunt would not hear to your going on when I tell them that you saved my life."

The two now set out, Lucy leading the way and Dick following, leading Major.

Not much conversation was indulged in until the road was reached, and then Dick drew a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad to be out of there," he said; "I thought that I was doomed to have to pass the night there, and would but for your appearance."

"And I would have had to pass the night there, too, but for your presence there!" said the girl, with a shudder.

"It seems to have been a fortunate meeting for both of us," smiled Dick.

"Yes, indeed."

They walked up the road, which wound this way and that through the timber and around the foot of one hill after another, and presently, as they rounded a bend in the road, they saw four horsemen approaching.

Dick saw at a glance that the men were British dragoons, for they wore the British uniform, and he glanced at the girl to see how she liked the situation.

The young "Liberty Boy" saw that there was a look of vexation and displeasure on the girl's face, and, he thought, a worried and somewhat frightened look as well.

"What is the matter, Miss Lucy?" asked Dick. The dragoons were still two hundred yards distant, and there was time to exchange a few words.

"You see those men coming?" the girl said.

"Yes."

"They are British dragoons."

"So I see."

"The leader, the young officer, is Lieutenant Marvin, and he has been coming to my uncle's house for several weeks o—to—sec——"

"To see you, Miss Lucy?" said Dick, quietly. "I don't blame him for coming. He has excellent taste."

The girl blushed and said, hurriedly: "He is a jealous-hearted, hot-tempered man, and I fear he will think that you—that you are——"

"Another suitor for your hand, Miss Lucy?"

"Yes, and he may pick a quarrel with you."

"One word, Miss Lucy," said Dick, in a low, cautious tone, for the redcoats were not far away; "do you care for this lieutenant? Would you grieve if he were to be killed?"

"No, I hate him!" passionately. "I hate him, but fear him."

"Very well; then rest easy. If he picks a quarrel with me he will wish that he had not done so."

There was no time for further exchange of words for the redcoats were close at hand. When within ten yards of the two the dragoons brought their horses to a stop and the lieutenant doffed his hat and bowed to Lucy with exaggerated politeness.

"Ah, good evening, Miss Lucy," he said; "I trust you have enjoyed your walk?"

"I have not been for a walk, Lieutenant Marvin," was the quick reply.

"No? Where, then, have you been?" There was so much of insolence and arrogance in the tone that Dick's blood boiled and he looked at the officer in such a way as to attract that worthy's attention. Indeed, the lieutenant was glaring at Dick with the intention of overawing and frightening him, and he found to his surprise that the young and bronzed stranger was giving back more than was sent.

"I was in the woods gathering wild flowers," was Lucy's reply.

"Ah, yes; and this—this—young man, he was with you, of course!"

"No, no!" was the hasty denial, for Lucy was afraid the handsome young stranger would get into a serious difficulty and perhaps be killed. "We met only a few minutes ago, and quite by accident."

"Ah, indeed?" There was unbelief and insolence in the lieutenant's tone, and Dick could hardly contain himself and keep from telling him what he thought of him. He thought it as well to wait a bit, however, and let the girl have the say-so.

"Yes," went on Lucy; "I was gathering flowers and

suddenly I saw a panther slipping up on me and I ran with all my might. It so happened that I came upon this gentleman, who was lost in the timber, and he shot the panther and saved my life."

There was so much of gratitude in the girl's tone as she said Dick had saved her life, that the lieutenant noticed it, and he at once jumped to the conclusion that Lucy had fallen in love with Dick. This made him furious, and it was plain that he had hard work holding his angry passions in check.

"So he saved your life, did he?" he growled, looking very far from being pleased. Indeed, one might have thought from his looks that he would rather the panther had eaten the girl than that she had been saved by the handsome stranger.

"Yes, yes; but for him I should have been torn to pieces by the hungry beast."

"Humph! Rather strange that he should have happened to be there just at the right time, and in the right place!" sneered the lieutenant.

"It—it—just—just happened so," stammered the girl. She saw that the officer was jealous and suspicious, and that he did not believe that the meeting had been a chance one; and as she knew the man's disposition she feared for the brave and handsome youth who had saved her life.

"Bah! don't tell me any such rot as that!" suddenly exclaimed the lieutenant as his jealous anger got the better of him. "He may have shot and killed a panther and saved your life, as you say, but he was there, not by chance but by appointment to meet you!" and the young officer, livid with rage, shook his finger at the frightened girl.

"No, no; I assure you that you are wrong," the girl cried; "he was not there by appointment. I never saw him before in my life, and had no idea that there was such a person in the world. It was altogether a chance meeting."

"Bosh!" sneered the lieutenant. "That is false, and you know it!"

The girl was about to speak, but Dick made a gesture and restrained her. "Don't say any more, Miss Lucy," the youth said, gently and calmly; "let me talk to him." Then he turned and taking a step forward, faced the lieutenant. He stared the officer in the eyes for a few moments with such a peculiarly fierce and threatening stare that the man was held speechless, and then extending his arm Dick pointed his finger at the fellow.

"Do you know what you are?" he asked, in such a calm and even voice that the officer was surprised into saying:

"No. What?"

"One of the most cowardly and consummate scoundrels that I have ever met in all my travels!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CHOLERIC LIEUTENANT.

To say that the hearers were astonished by the young stranger's words, is putting it mildly.

It is hard saying who was the most surprised, but it is easy to say that the one most startled was Lucy, for she thought that her companion had sealed his fate. She turned pale, and fairly trembled.

And if Lucy was startled the lieutenant was made furiously angry. So great was his astonishment, however, that for the time being he was rendered incapable of saying a word or making a movement. He simply sat on his horse and stared at the bold youth in open-mouthed amazement. His three comrades, too, stared at Dick, wonderingly. They could not think what manner of man he could be who would speak in such a way to a British officer, and when the officer was accompanied, too, by some of his men.

Dick had spoken in a calm, even tone, but there was such a grim, fierce undertone to the utterance that it had caused more amazement and anger in the lieutenant's breast than if the words had been shouted out angrily and furiously.

Presently the officer regained the use of his faculties and the result was that his temporary inability to speak or move had had a good effect. It had given him time to think, and he made up his mind to play with the man who had dared to talk insolently to him, to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse, and then finally kill him. Yes, that was what he would do; and in pursuance of this resolve, instead of bursting out in a passionate outburst, as his comrades expected he would do, the lieutenant merely showed his teeth in a cruel and what he intended to be a dangerous smile, and said:

"So you think I am a cowardly scoundrel, do you?"

"I know it!" was the prompt reply.

The lieutenant had hard work to hold himself in, but managed to do so and hissed:

"Oh, you know it, eh?"

"Yes."

"On what do you base your judgment?"

"On the fact that you practically called this young lad a liar."

"What! You say I did that?"

"I do."

"How do you make that out?"

"It is very simple: You said you did not believe what she said about our meeting being accidental. You state that her statement was false, and that you did not believe what she said."

"Nor do I!" the lieutenant cried, hotly.

"That statement proves what I said about you."

"I don't see it that way."

"I do."

"Explain."

"It is simple enough. No one but a coward and scoundrel would tell a lady that she states a falsehood."

"Bah! You're a fool!"

"You're another and bigger one, and a knave in the bargain!"

Still the lieutenant managed to restrain himself. He could hardly do it, his inclination being to draw a pistol and shoot the bold speaker down or to draw his sword and cut him down, but he wished to play with the intended victim a while longer before ending the affair. He wished indeed, to prolong the agony and distress which he saw the girl was undergoing. He was just that cruel-hearted and mean-spirited; he was jealous and angry, and wished to punish the maiden for, as he thought, deceiving him or attempting to do so.

The three troopers looked at one another in surprise, and then at their leader in wonder. They could not understand the matter at all. They had never seen him exercise control over his passions in all the time they had been with him.

"Oh, so I'm a knave, am I?" remarked the lieutenant, sneeringly.

"You are!" Dick knew the affair would come to a climax presently and was all ready for action when the moment should arrive.

"And I suppose you think so, too, eh, Miss Lucy?" sneeringly.

"Me? Oh, no; I—that is—I—don't——"

"Don't pay any attention to him, Miss Lucy," interrupted Dick, calmly; "he isn't worth noticing."

"Oh, he isn't, eh?" the officer cried, his face black with rage.

"You heard what I said," was Dick's calm reply; "and what I say, I mean, and will stand by."

"Oh, you will?"

"I will."

"Well, well! Hear the young bantam talk!" sneered the lieutenant. "One would think that he was a warrior, eh, boys?" the last to his three comrades.

"He talks bold enough, certainly," said one.

"He talks too boldly, I think!" from another.

"He needs a lesson in manners!" from the third.

"Don't worry," said the lieutenant, significantly; "I am going to give him the lesson!"

"All by yourself?" asked Dick.

"Yes, all by myself! You don't suppose that I will need any help, do you?"

"I don't suppose so; I know you will need help."

"Bah! you are about the biggest boaster that I have ever met in all my life."

"I could never hope to come up to you, however," was the calm reply.

"I am not a boaster."

"No?"

"No. What I say I will do I will do."

"If you can."

"There is no 'if I can' about it—at least not in this instance."

"You will find your mistake if you attempt to teach me a lesson, as you put it, alone and unaided by your comrades."

"My comrades will not lift a hand to aid me, and yet I will not only teach you a lesson—I will kill you!"

"Oh, you are of a sanguinary disposition, then?" with an exasperating smile.

"Not ordinarily; but I have taken a dislike to you—such a great dislike, in fact, that I have made up my mind to put you out of the world!"

"I'm afraid you have taken too big a contract for once in your life," was the calm reply. "But it grows late and we wish to be going on our way, so if you are going to do anything, do it at once."

"With pleasure, you insolent peasant! But you will never go any farther on your way, so you need not be in a hurry. You stop here—for good!"

"If I were a betting man, lieutenant, I would be willing to lay you a wager on that," smiled Dick.

"Bah! you are an egotistical idiot, with not enough brains to warn you that you are in danger."

"The last part of that statement might with more propriety be applied to you, lieutenant."

"Bosh! Have you a sword?"

"Oh, yes; I never travel without one."

The redcoats stared, for they had not seen any sign of

such a weapon on the youth's person. It was not there, however, but in a scabbard hanging on the horn of the saddle on Major, and Dick quickly possessed himself of the weapon. He took the sword by the hilt with the right hand and by the point with the left, and without apparently exerting himself to any great extent, bent the blade till it marked a semi-circle in the air.

"Good blade that," remarked Dick, carelessly, as he let go of the point and the sword resumed its former shape with a peculiar swishing sound.

The three troopers looked at one another in amazement and with a questioning air, as much as to say: "What manner of man is this fellow, anyway?"

The lieutenant had witnessed Dick's feat with surprise also, but he tried to conceal the fact that he was surprised under a look of scorn.

"A good blade? Bah!" he sneered. "It must be made of tin!"

"You say that because I bent it so easily," smiled Dick; "if you will kindly test it yourself?" and he extended the sword, holding it by the point, the hilt toward the officer.

Lieutenant Marvin took the sword and grasping it the same way Dick had done he attempted to bend it. To his surprise he could bend it very little. The blade, while seemingly supple and elastic, was yet remarkably unyielding. Thinking there must be some trick about it the officer turned the blade and tried to bend it in the other direction—with the same result.

The lieutenant was disconcerted, his three comrades were astonished and Dick was amused. He smiled in a most exasperating way.

"You don't find the blade made of tin, after all?" he remarked.

"No," in a growl; "it seems more like a bar of solid steel."

"Yet it is very elastic and pliable, when one has hold of it that is possessed of strength," said Dick, coolly, and having received the weapon back he took hold of it as before, and with seemingly scarcely any exertion, bent it in a half circle and held it that way for quite a little while.

"You see how easy it is?" he remarked. "It is a splendid blade, quite equal to the best Toledo blades in existence."

"It must be a trick blade," said the lieutenant, unwilling to have it appear that he was not the equal of the stranger in muscular strength.

"Oh, no, it is not a trick blade, but a genuine, fine-weapon, such as any soldier might be willing to trust his life to."

The three dragoons looked at one another with questions in their eyes. They could not understand what manner of man this was. They had never seen any one who was as strong as Dick seemed to be—as, indeed, he had proven himself to be; and they began to suspect that their comrade had gotten himself into trouble.

"I'm inclined to think that this stranger is a dangerous fellow, comrade, what do you think?" whispered one to another.

"I think the same thing," was the reply.

"I am of the opinion that the lieutenant would do well to permit us to attack the fellow in concert."

"That is my opinion, too."

"But he won't do it."

"No; he wants the satisfaction of overcoming the fellow without assistance."

"I know; but I fear he will meet with a disappointment."

"I am afraid so; but he would not listen to us if we were to say anything."

"You are right."

This talk, carried on in whispers, took place while the lieutenant was dismounting and getting ready for the combat, so he did not notice it; but Dick did, and he could have given a pretty shrewd guess regarding what the men were saying.

He turned to the girl, and, with a smile, said: "Perhaps it will be as well for you to go on your way, Miss Lucy. I will rejoin you as soon as I have settled this little matter between the lieutenant and myself."

"You can go on if you like, Miss Lucy," said the lieutenant, showing his teeth like a vicious dog when snarling; "but the gentleman will never rejoin you."

"Don't be too sure, my friend," said Dick, calmly; "remember that there is nothing so uncertain as a sure thing."

"There is nothing uncertain about this sure thing," was the reply; "there are not half a dozen officers in more than two regiments of the king's troops who are my superiors in the use of the sword."

"And in an experience of three years, during which time I have encountered in single combat the best swordsmen in a dozen of the king's regiments, I have never yet met my equal with the sword," was Dick's calm reply.

This made the lieutenant and his three men stare; but the officer finally decided that the utterance was merely bravado, and he laughed sneeringly.

"You amuse me by such talk as that," he said.

"And I will do a great deal more than amuse you when

we cross swords," was the significant and calmly threatening reply.

"Jove! did you ever hear such a boaster, boys?" the lieutenant cried.

"You will soon find that I have not been boasting," said Dick, quietly, and the three dragoons looked as if they thought that this would prove to be the case.

"If you are not going to go on to your home, girl, stand to one side out of the way," said the lieutenant, harshly; "and then as soon as I have finished carving this boaster up into bits, I will escort you to your home."

The girl paled, but stepped to one side. Her eyes were on Dick, and it was evident that she felt fear for his safety. He saw this and smiled at her reassuringly.

"There's a bargain, lieutenant!" he cried.

"What do you mean?"

"That the winner of this bout is to escort the lady to her home."

"I will escort her to her home, certainly!" This was said with arrogance.

"If you win, of course you can do so, I suppose, as you are the kind of man to force your company on a lady against her will; but I wish to know if, in case I win, I may be permitted to accompany her without interference from your men, here?"

"I will make no promises."

"Then I will have to fight all three of your men in case I defeat you?"

"You will not defeat me."

"But if I should I will have to fight the three?"

"You would have to do so—yes; but you will not, for you won't defeat me." The lieutenant was arrogant in the extreme.

"I will defeat you; and unless you order your men, now and here, not to interfere with me, after the combat is over, I will be forced to kill you. Otherwise I will only defeat you and will not take your life."

"That is very kind of you!" sneeringly.

"Then you will not give the order to your men?"

"Most assuredly not."

"Very well, your blood be upon your own head—and that of your men as well."

There was such grim and deadly earnestness in Dick's tone that the lieutenant was impressed in spite of his desire not to be, and he glared at the speaker with a look of amazement, not entirely unmingled with fear. Then he suddenly set his teeth and hissed:

"Bah! you are but a boaster at the best! Defend yourself, you clodhopper—if you can!"

CHAPTER III.

DICK DEFEATS THE REDCOAT.

The girl and the three dragoons watched the combat with almost breathless interest. The girl's hands were clasped and there was a look of terror in her eyes. The dragoons, however, while they watched with interest, did not betray much anxiety. The truth of the matter was that they were not in love with the lieutenant. He was so bigoted and arrogant that they disliked him, and were not averse to seeing him taken down a bit, though of course they did not wish to see him killed by the stranger.

The lieutenant, of course, as being the aggressor, took the offensive and forced the fighting fiercely. He did not as yet have any idea that he was pitted against his master, and consequently he pushed things with confidence, feeling sure that he would be able to end matters quickly.

He was showy in the use of the sword, and had at his finger tips a number of tricks and devices which might, indeed undoubtedly have fooled a novice and caused him trouble; but Dick was no novice, and he merely laughed at the flimsy tricks and set them at naught with the utmost ease. And as the lieutenant realized that his opponent was not to be caught with tricks, for the first time a feeling akin to fear began to take possession of him. He remembered, now, that his opponent had said that he had met the best swordsmen of a dozen different British regiments and had never met his equal with the sword, and he began to wonder if the cool, calm stranger had not told the truth, after all.

The three dragoons exchanged meaning glances. They realized that their leader had encountered a foeman worthy of his best efforts, and as they saw with what ease the stranger youth managed to evade all the tricks and thrusts of the lieutenant, and how cool and calm and unconcerned he was, they began to think that their comrade had even met his master.

Even Lucy, as little as she knew about such things, she never having seen a duel in her life, began to think that her champion was going to be able to at least hold his own, and at the thought her heart thrilled with joy.

"Oh, how I hope he will triumph over the lieutenant!" she said to herself.

The British officer, becoming angered by the fact that his opponent set all his best efforts at naught, pressed upon Dick fiercely, doubtless hoping to overcome him by a fierce onslaught. He could make no headway in this way, either, and a muttered curse escaped him.

"Don't get angry, lieutenant," said Dick, calmly, and smiling in that cool and peculiarly exasperating way of his; "take it philosophically, as I am doing. Take things as they come and look pleasant, that is the best way."

"Oh, shut your mouth!" cried the lieutenant. "Nobody is asking you for any advice as to how to act."

"I know; but when I see a man in trouble I always feel like helping him out, either with words or deeds."

"I'm not in trouble."

"No?" with exasperating coolness.

"No!"

"Why the muttered curses, then?"

"I didn't give utterance to any muttered curses."

"I beg your pardon; then I must have misunderstood you."

"You certainly did."

"Then what were you saying, if it is a fair question?"

"I was asking myself where I should wound you first."

Dick burst into a peal of laughter. The affair was so absurdly ludicrous that he could not help it. He knew the lieutenant was bothered, and was more than half convinced that he had met his master, and his statement that he was asking himself where he should wound Dick was very funny to say the least.

The laughter had the effect of making the lieutenant furious with rage, and he made a fiercer attack than any he had yet attempted; Dick, however, though still laughing aloud, easily defended himself; and as the three dragoons saw this they exchanged meaning glances. They had made up their minds, now, that the stranger was their comrade's master and that he held the lieutenant's life in his hand.

"I'll make you laugh!" the officer grated. "I'll make you laugh out of the other side of your mouth!"

"Excuse me, lieutenant," said Dick, with exaggerated politeness; "I am very sorry to act in such an uncourteous manner, but really I could not help it. Your statement was so naive that I had to laugh."

"That is all right; laugh if you like. It will soon be my turn to laugh."

"Perhaps so, lieutenant."

"There is no perhaps about it; I am going to kill you, as sure as my name is Marvin!"

"And I shall endeavor to see to it that you do nothing of the kind."

"You will not be able to help yourself."

"No?"

"No!"

"I think I can prove to the contrary."

"Thinking and doing are two different things."

"As you are soon to learn."

"Bah!"

The lieutenant kept up the attack, but Dick could see that he was getting tired. His attack was not so fierce as it had been; his cuts and thrusts lacked speed and strength and precision.

"You are getting tired, lieutenant," said Dick, calmly; "perhaps we had better stop a while so that you may rest a bit."

A curse went up from the officer's lips.

"You insolent hound!" he cried. "I will show you that I am not so tired but what I can put an end to you!"

Then he attacked fiercely for a few moments and exhausted his remaining supply of strength and energy.

"Now I have you utterly at my mercy, lieutenant," said Dick, grimly and decidedly.

"You have not."

"I will show you."

Dick now took the offensive and began attacking the officer so fiercely that he was forced back in spite of all he could do.

"What did I tell you?" asked Dick.

The lieutenant made no reply. His teeth were set and there was a frightened look in his eyes, however.

It was plain he realized that he had met his master, that he was, as the other said, at his mercy.

The three dragoons realized it also and looked at one another inquiringly. They were mutely questioning one another as to whether or not they should pitch upon the stranger and help their leader to dispose of him.

Dick seemed to realize what would likely be the action of the three, for he said to the lieutenant:

"As I just said, I have your life at my mercy and I will take it unless you give your three men orders to not attack me now or at any time during my presence here."

"I will not give the order!"

"You will give it or die!" said Dick, with such deadly earnestness that his opponent knew he meant it. "And you had better give the order at once, for if they should happen to make up their minds to try to help you and should make a motion to do so, I would cut you down on the instant—do you hear? Your life hangs by a thread, even now!"

The lieutenant turned paler than ever; it was evident that he realized his danger, and it was equally evident that he had no desire to die, for he said to his men:

"Make no attempt to aid me, boys. I do not wish it, as I told you in the first place."

"Now acknowledge yourself beaten and this affair may stop," said Dick. "I have no desire to kill you."

"Acknowledge myself beaten?"

"Yes."

The lieutenant was evidently having a severe struggle with himself; but at last his desire to live conquered his pride, and he said:

"Very well; I acknowledge defeat."

"Very well; that ends the affair, then," said Dick, and he stepped back and returned his sword to its place in the scabbard hanging on the saddle horn. He kept a close watch on the lieutenant and his men, however, for he did not trust them wholly.

"Now, Miss Lucy, we will go on our way," the youth said, quietly.

The girl started and gave a half-frightened look at the British officer, and then made her way to Dick's side.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Dick, and then he and the girl made their way past the four redcoats and on up the road, Dick horse, Major, following along behind them.

When they were almost to the next bend Dick glanced back and saw that the redcoats were still in the same spot, and they were looking after the two and talking earnestly.

"They mean mischief," thought Dick; "I will have to be on my guard. That lieutenant is not the fellow to give up so easily, under any circumstances, and now that he is laboring under the impression that this girl loves me, he will try to put me out of the way."

The girl looked back also and saw the redcoats, and with a shudder she said:

"Oh, Mr. Martin, I fear you have gotten yourself into a great danger, for Lieutenant Marvin is, I am sure, a very terrible man!"

"I do not fear him," smiled Dick.

"No, but I fear he will not give you a fair chance for your life next time."

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it; he is a bad man."

"Well, forewarned is forearmed. I shall be on my guard, and I don't think he will get a chance to do me injury."

The girl started to say something, hesitated and was silent. Only for a few moments, however, and then she said:

"There is something which I deem it best to tell you, Mr. Martin. I do not know that you are a patriot, but I suspect from what you said to the lieutenant that you are, and I must warn you not to let my uncle know it, if such is the case."

"Why not, Miss Lucy?"

"Because—he is one of the worst and most radical Tories in these parts."

"Ah!—and you, Miss Lucy? Are you a Tory also?"

"No, I am not," was the reply. "But I let uncle think that I am. I have no home but his house, and I could not live there if he knew I was a patriot."

"And your aunt—is she a Tory?"

"She never says anything, one way or the other. She seems to think that whatever uncle says or does is all right, however, so I guess that she is more Tory than patriot."

"Very well; I thank you for the warning, Miss Lucy, and I will not say or do anything to make your uncle think I am a patriot. I will even give him the impression that I am a Tory, for I deem all fair in love or war."

"I think you are right, Mr. Martin," said the girl, with a blush.

They walked onward, talking in a friendly manner, and presently came in sight of a good-sized house standing a little way back from the road.

"That is uncle's house," said the girl; "now, don't forget, Mr. Martin, and say or do anything to arouse uncle's suspicions, or there is no telling what he might do."

"I will be careful, Miss Lucy."

A few minutes later they were at the house and a tall, raw-boned, rather hard-featured man was standing on the porch.

"Is et you, Lucy, at last?" he said, in a complaining voice. "Whur under ther sun hev ye been so long?"

"I was gathering flowers, uncle."

"Humph! gatherin' flowers!" there was contempt in the tone which said plain as words could have done that the speaker did not think much of flowers. "Whur did ye pick this stranger up?" eyeing Dick searchingly.

"This is Mr. Martin, uncle; he is a traveler and he saved my life by shooting a panther that was chasing me."

"Humph! Saved yer life, did he?" There was not much of graciousness in the tone.

"Yes, uncle."

"Humph! I'm glad ter know ye, Mister Martin—ef ye hain't er rebel," the man said.

"Oh, I'm not a rebel," said Dick, smiling. "I'm glad to meet you, Mr.——"

"Sim Harker is my name, an' I'm er loyal subjeck uv ther good King George, and I don' keer who knows et, by George!"

"All right; I'm glad to know you, Mr. Harper, or any man who is so frank in his statements as you are. One

knows right where to look for you, and that is better than to be in doubt and perhaps be deceived in the end."

"Thet's right; I'm jes' whut I am, an' I don' keer who knows et. An' I don' hev no use nur sympathy fur rebels, ye bet on thet! I'd ruther he'p hang one ter er tree than ter do ennythin' thet I know uv—even ter eatin' when I'm hungry."

"You must dislike rebels, sure enough," with a smile.

"I sartinly do. In my 'pinion ther rebels orter all be shot er hung ez fas' ez ever they kin be got erhold uv."

"Probably they would not coincide with you in your view of the case," laughed Dick.

"Proberbly not," with a quick, suspicious glance at the speaker.

"Mr. Martin wishes to remain here over night, uncle," said Lucy, quickly, for she feared the conversation would wander into dangerous channels.

"Oh, all right, Lucy; he's welcum, ez I wuz sayin'—ef he hain't er rebel."

"He has already told you he is not a rebel, uncle, and he saved my life."

"True, true, Lucy. Waal, bring yer hoss aroun' ter ther stable, Mister Martin, an' we'll giv' 'im sum feed."

The man led the way around the house, Dick following, leading Major, and he received a warning and half pleading look from Lucy as he went. The look said as plainly as words, "Be careful!"

When Major had been placed in a stall, and unbridled and unsaddled and given a measure of oats and some hay, the settler looked the animal over and said:

"Thet's er fine hoss, Mister Martin."

"You are right," was the reply; "he is a fine horse."

"Looks like he might git over ther groun' purty fas', ef he wuz put to et."

"Yes, he can go at a pretty lively gait on occasion."

Then the two went to the house and found supper almost ready. Lucy was helping her aunt in the kitchen, but she managed to catch Dick's eye through the half open doorway, and give him a warning look, which he answered with a reassuring smile.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCHEME TO CAPTURE DICK.

The four redcoats stood and watched Dick and Lucy until the two disappeared from sight around the bend in

the road, and then the lieutenant muttered a curse under his breath, and said:

"Boys, that scoundrel must die!"

"You think he is a rebel, lieutenant?" asked one.

"Yes, I do; but even if he wasn't he would have to die, anyway, for he has come between Lucy Lockhart and myself, and no one can do that and live!"

"How are you going to go about settling him, lieutenant?" asked another. "It strikes me it is going to be a pretty hard job."

"I'll do it some way!" hissed the officer. "He has got to die! He shall not live twenty-four hours longer!"

"Well, how are you going to work it?" asked the red-coat who had not yet spoken.

The lieutenant was silent for some time, thinking. He wrinkled his brows and pondered. At last a look of joy appeared on his face.

"I have it!" he cried. "I know how we can work it."

"How?"

"In this way: You know that Lucy's uncle is one of the most rabid Tories in this part of the country."

"Yes, we know that."

"Well, that makes it an easy matter to dispose of the rebel. We will go and hang around the house till we get a chance to talk with Simon Harper and then I will tell him that the young fellow he is harboring is a rebel, and he will be ready to go right in with us and help us. Then we will wait till the stranger is in bed and asleep, and go into his room and shoot or hang him."

"That ought to work, all right," said one of the dragoons.

The other two nodded and the lieutenant said:

"Of course it will work. It can't help working."

The four led their horses into the timber and there they remained until it was dark, and then came out, mounted, and rode back up the road in the direction of the Tory's home. When within two hundred yards of the house they dismounted, led their horses in among the trees and tied them. Then they walked onward and paused at the yard fence.

They had not been standing there long when they heard the rear door open and shut, and the lieutenant whispered to his men to remain where they were and then hastened away.

As the officer had expected, the person who had emerged from the house was Simon Harper, and he was making his way to the stable to finish up the chores that remained undone. When the lieutenant appeared by his side, just as he reached the stable door, Harper was surprised.

"Hullo! is that you, lieutenant?" he exclaimed. "Why I thort ye wuz a'most ter Ninety-Six by this time."

"And so I would have been, Mr. Harper, but I have found some work to do, and so did not return to Ninety Six, at once, as I had intended to do."

"Foun' sum work ter do, hey?"

"Yes."

"Whut is ther work?"

"The killing of a rebel!"

The lieutenant fairly hissed the words out.

"Ther killin' uv er rebel?"

"Yes—a rebel scout and spy."

"Whur is theer such er feller?"

"In your house!"

"Whut's thet?" The Tory was amazed.

"I said, in your house!"

"In my house?"

"Yes, in your house, right now; at this very moment!"

"Er rebel scout an' spy?"

"Yes."

The Tory started and an exclamation escaped his lips.

"Ye mean thet feller thet cum ter ther house with Lucy?" he asked.

"He, and no other!"

"An' ye say he's er rebel?"

"He is!"

"How d'ye know?"

"He told me so."

"He told ye so?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"This evening; not an hour ago."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"How did he cum ter do et?"

"Why, he and I were going to fight a duel with swords, and he told me that he had fought with a dozen at least of the best swordsmen in the British army."

"He told ye thet?"

"He did."

"Then he must be er rebel!"

"Of course he is."

"But how cum ye ter be erbout ter fight with him?"

"Well, in the first place, on Lucy's account."

"On Lucy's account?"

"Yes."

"Why so?"

"Because I am sure that she is in love with him, and

this made me angry, as you know I am a suitor for the girl's hand."

"True; but ye mus' be mistook erbout thet, becos Lucy never saw ther feller afore this evenin', an' she couldn' hardly be in love with him so queck ez all thet, ye know."

"I don't know any such thing. A girl can and will fall in love with a fellow in an instant, at first sight, especially if it so happens that he has done something, as saving her life, as was the case this time; the scoundrel having been so fortunate as to kill a panther that was chasing Lucy."

"I know he done thet. Lucy tole me so herself."

"Right; and she has fallen in love with the young rebel!"

"D'ye think so?" There was slumbering wrath in the tone.

"I am sure of it!"

"An' ye're shore ther feller is er rebel?"

"Of course I am. Why, I fought a duel with him and he boasted that he had beaten many of the best swordsmen in the British army."

"An' d'ye think he tole ther trooth?"

"I do; for he defeated me easily, and I am considered a good swordsman."

"He defeated you?"

"Yes."

"In er sword dool?"

"Yes; I was like a novice as opposed to him." It was hard for the lieutenant to make this admission, but he wished to impress the Tory with the fact that the youth was a rebel and a dangerous fellow.

"Humph! then I've got er rebel in my house, shore enuff, hey?"

"Yes; and I want your help to enable us to put an end to him."

There was something so vicious in the tone of the officer's voice that the Tory shuddered slightly. Still he hated all rebels to such an extent, however, that he was not only ready but willing and glad to lend himself to any plan which would result in putting a hated enemy out of the way.

"Whut d'ye want me ter do?"

"I want you to help us capture him."

"When—right now?"

"No; some time to-night, after he is sound asleep."

"Oh, thet'll be easy."

"What I want you to do is to remain awake, and when you are sure the rebel is asleep you must open the door and let us enter. Do you understand?"

"Yes, thet'll be easy."

"And when we are in the house you will guide us to the room occupied by the rebel. Understand?"

"Yes."

"There your part of the work may end. We will attend to the rest."

"Air yer three men with ye?"

"Yes."

"All right; ther four uv ye orter be able ter han'le ther chap."

"Yes; he won't have any chance, anyway, as we will take him at such a disadvantage he will be helpless."

"Ye're right."

"We will have him tight and fast before he is fairly awake."

"Thet's right; an' then whut air ye goin' ter do with him?"

"We will take him out in the timber a ways and string him up to a stout limb!"

There was extreme viciousness in the lieutenant's tone, and there was no doubt that he meant what he said. If the "rebel" was delivered into his hands the officer would not have any mercy on him.

"Thet will be er good way ter git rid uv him," said Harper. "Et's ther way all rebels orter be served."

"You are right; well, we can depend on you to do your part?"

"Uv course ye kin."

"You'll unfasten and open the door and show us to the rebel's room?"

"Yes."

"About what time will you open the door, do you think?"

"Oh, I dunno; erbout eleven o'clock, I guess."

"All right; we will be at the back door at eleven o'clock."

"I won't keep ye waitin' long arter thet."

"Good! Well, good-by till then."

"So long ter ye."

The lieutenant turned away and made his way back to his comrades at the yard fence.

"Was it Harper?" asked one of the dragoons.

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He is willing and glad to aid us."

"Good!"

"He is going to open the rear door at eleven o'clock or when he is sure the fellow is sound asleep, and then he will lead us to the room the rebel is in and we will then have no trouble in making a prisoner of the scoundrel."

"That's a good plan; and it ought to work like a charm."

"It will, I am sure."

"I don't see why it shouldn't."

"Nor I; and now let us hunt up some comfortable place to stay, for we will have to wait several hours."

The four made their way to where some haystacks stood, and pulling out some of the hay they soon had a nice, soft place to lie.

Mr. Harper, when he had finished his chores, made his way back to the house, and although he tried to keep from doing so, he could not help eyeing Dick with interest. In spite of himself the man could not help rather admiring the looks of the handsome, manly looking youth, and while he was sure the young fellow was a "rebel," and hated him on that account, he could not do other than acknowledge that his guest was a fine-looking fellow, even though a rebel.

Then remembering what the lieutenant had said about Lucy being in love with the stranger, he watched her covertly. He saw that the girl cast frequent glances in the youth's direction, and came to the conclusion that they were glances of admiration.

"I more'n half berleeve ther lieutenant is right," the man said to himself; "I guess ther gal is more'n half in love with ther feller. Waal, et won't do her no good, fur when mornin' comes he'll be dead ez er door-nail."

Lucy was so afraid that something that would cause trouble might come up in the conversation between her uncle and their guest that she was glad when Dick at last said he was ready to retire. Mr. Harper took a candle and showed the youth to his room, which was downstairs and in the far corner of the house. The Tory gave Dick this room on purpose, so that the lieutenant and his three comrades would not have to go upstairs in order to make a prisoner of the youth.

"I guess ye'll be comforterble in heer," said Harper, as he placed the candle on a small stand at one side of the room.

"Oh, yes, thank you!" replied Dick.

"Waal, good-night ter ye."

"Good-night."

Mr. Harper left the room, closing the door behind him, and went back to the sitting-room.

The three talked for a few minutes and then went upstairs to bed. Mr. Harper was careful not to permit himself to go to sleep, however, and when he thought it was nearing the hour of eleven he arose, dressed himself, and made his way stealthily downstairs.

He looked at the clock by the light of a candle which he had lighted and found that it was lacking only a few minutes of eleven.

"I might ez well let ther lieutenant an' his men in," thought Harper; "ther rebel is shõrely ez soun' ersleep ez he'll be ter-night, by this time."

He made his way to the back door and cautiously and noiselessly unbolted and opened it.

The four redcoats were just outside, and at the signal from the man they stole through the doorway and into the kitchen.

"Is he asleep, do you think?" asked the lieutenant, in a cautious whisper.

"I think so, ef he's ergoin' ter go ter sleep ter-night, he is," was the reply.

"All right; lead the way to his room."

"Come erlong," and the man led the way to the room in the far corner of the house.

At the door he paused and listened intently for a few moments.

"He's ersleep!" he whispered to the lieutenant. "I kin heer him breathin' heavy-like, ez people do when they're ersleep."

"All right; open the door and then get out of the way. We will attend to the rest."

The man lifted the latch and pushed against the door.

CHAPTER V.

DICK A PRISONER.

The door yielded and went open slowly and noiselessly. For once in his life Dick had been guilty of carelessness. As a rule, when spending the night at the house of a settler, he was careful to fasten the door of the room in which he was to sleep, but on this night he had forgotten to do so. He had undressed, blown out the light and got in bed without having once thought of fastening the door, and the result was that when Mr. Harper lifted the latch and pushed, the door opened.

Mr. Harper, having done what he had agreed to do, stepped back and the lieutenant and the three men stole into the room. They advanced to the bedside with noiseless steps and paused. Harper held the candle in such a way that enough light entered the room so that the redcoats could see to do their work, but not enough to dispel the darkness sufficiently to make the youth's sleep uneasy, a sudden change from darkness to light being enough to awaken many people.

The redcoats did not delay, however. Their intended

ictim was before them, and was undoubtedly at their mercy, since he was sound asleep, and was only one while they were four.

At a signal from the lieutenant all four seized the sleeper, and as they had brought some pieces of rope with them, they had succeeded in binding Dick's arms almost before he was fully awake.

He looked at the four men, and, recognizing them, realized what it meant.

"So it is you, lieutenant?" he remarked, sarcastically.

"Yes, it is I. But we have no time to waste; help him on his clothing, boys."

The three dragoons aided Dick, and it did not take long to get him dressed.

"Now come with us," the lieutenant said.

"Where to?"

"That does not matter. You have to go, so don't stop to ask questions."

"Oh, that is all right; you will understand that I would naturally have some curiosity regarding our destination."

"You will find out our destination soon enough."

"Doubtless you are right."

"Yes; come along and don't cry out for help, as it will do you no good."

"Oh, you needn't worry about that," said Dick, quietly; "I do not intend to cry out."

"See that you don't; it would be heard by no one save Mr. and Mrs. Harper and Lucy Lockhart, and the first two named are in sympathy with us. As for the other, I should not care if she were to hear you crying out and begging for mercy."

"She, nor any one else will never hear me begging for mercy," was the quiet reply. "It would do no good to beg of you, anyway, if I am any judge, for I size you up as being as merciful as a ravening wolf!"

"Toward rebels I am just about that merciful and no more so. I freely admit it; but enough talk. Move along!"

One of the redcoats walked on each side of Dick, and Mr. Harper led the way, candle in hand. When they reached the rear door of the kitchen and passed through, the lieutenant bade the settler good night, and the four redcoats hastened away with Dick in their midst.

They made their way through the timber and up the mountainside, which rose ahead of them. They continued on for perhaps a quarter of a mile and then they came to a stop in a little glade, in the centre of which was a large tree.

It was a moonlight night, and below, seemingly almost

at their feet, could be seen the house they left a few minutes before.

"Now, Morgan, make a running noose in the end of the rope you brought with you," said the lieutenant.

"All right," was the reply, and the man addressed took a rope from around his waist and quickly rigged a running noose in the end of it.

"Now put the noose over the prisoner's head."

The man did as ordered.

"How do you like the feel of that?" asked the officer, maliciously.

"Well, as I make it a rule to always tell the truth, I can not say that I really like the feel of the rope," was the calm reply.

"I didn't suppose you would!"

"I don't suppose you will like the feel of the rope that chokes the breath out of you, either," said Dick, calmly.

"The rope isn't made that will do that!" sneered the lieutenant.

"Perhaps not; but you cannot be sure of it."

"I am sure of it. I will never be hung."

"If you get your just deserts, you will be."

A curse escaped the lips of the officer.

"You are the most insolent scoundrel that ever I saw!" he snarled.

"Speaking of scoundrels," remarked Dick, quietly; "you are, I think, about the champion scoundrel of the world!"

Another curse escaped the lieutenant's lips, and then he forced a laugh.

"You are trying to anger me sufficiently to get me to shoot you, and thus escape death by hanging," he said; "but you cannot work the scheme. You will die the death of a dog, at the end of that rope!"

"I'll wager you anything you like that I do not do anything of the kind," was the prompt reply.

"Bah! I would not wager with a dead man."

"I am not dead yet."

"But you are as good as dead."

"Oh, no."

"Bah! You have not fifteen minutes to live!"

"Make it fifteen years, lieutenant, and come nearer the exact truth."

"Bosh! Who are you?"

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"A man."

"Such talk will avail you nothing. Who are you?"

"I have told you."

"What is your name?"

"Martin—Frank Martin."

"Where are you from?"

"Everywhere."

"You know what I mean."

"Do I?"

"Yes. Where is your home?"

"Wherever I happen to be."

"But you claim some place as home—some State. Which one is it?"

"Oh, I have no preference. I am at home in any State."

"I believe that you are from the North."

"Do you?"

"I do."

"Well, you have that privilege."

"You are, are you not?"

"I'm sure I cannot say."

"You are from the North, and you are a rebel spy!"

"Am I?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"It is easy to see that much."

"You must be possessed of remarkably good eyesight."

"Are you alone in this part of the country or have you comrades somewhere in the vicinity?"

Dick laughed scornfully.

"My dear lieutenant, what do you take me for?" he said.

"Do you for one moment think that I would tell you anything?"

"Supposing I promised to spare your life if you told me who you really are, whether you have comrades in these parts, and all about yourself?"

"I would tell you nothing. You would not keep your promise, anyway, even if you were to make one."

"Oh, yes, I would."

"It doesn't matter; I will tell you nothing."

"Not if I give you my word of honor that I will not hang you, but will take you to Ninety-Six and turn you over to the officer in command there?"

"Certainly not."

"Think well before deciding."

"I have given the matter all necessary thought."

"I mean just what I say, and if you refuse to give me the information we will hang you to that limb up there!" pointing to the large outjutting limb from the tree under which they were standing.

"Go ahead with your work as soon as you like!" was the calm reply.

"You are a fool!"

"You are another!"

"You are an idiot!"

"Thank you; you are a bigger one."

"You had better tell!"

"Oh, stop your talk and do something!"

"Then you refuse to save your life by telling?"

"It would not save my life, even if you kept your promise, for I would be hung by the officer in command Ninety-Six. But you would not keep your promise; you would hear all I had to say, laugh at me for being so foolish as to take your word for anything and then hang me, just the same."

"I would do nothing of the kind."

"Yes, you would; I know you fellows like a book. There is not enough honor in a dozen such fellows as you to furnish one man with what he ought to have. I will give you nothing; that is final, so just go ahead with your work as soon as you like."

A muttered curse escaped the lips of the lieutenant.

"So be it!" he said; "if you wish to be a fool and ruin your life when there is no need of it, all right. One thing is certain, you will never marry Lucy Lockhart."

"I have never had any thought of marrying Miss Lockhart," was the calm reply; "I never met her until this afternoon, and as I have a sweetheart many miles from here, I don't think that there would be any danger that I would marry her, even if I did not lose my life here, to-night."

"Bah! you can't deceive me!" sneered the lieutenant.

"I am not trying to deceive you."

"Yes, you are; you love Lucy Lockhart, and you know it!"

"My dear lieutenant, you think that because you love her, all men must do so. That is where you make a mistake. Miss Lockhart is a very beautiful, sweet and sensible girl, but as I just told you, I have a sweetheart far from here, and have had no thought of this girl."

"You can talk that way all you like," was the sneering reply; "but you could not make me believe you."

"I suppose not; a jealous man cannot be made believe anything save what he ought not to believe."

"Bah! if you have any word to leave, speak it at once as I am going to give the order to have you strung up in a very few moments!"

"Well, in order to put that off as long as possible, I think that I had better think of something to say, do you?"

"This is no time for foolishness! I mean just what I say, and if you have anything to say, say it; for it is your last chance!"

"Well, to be frank with you, lieutenant, I have nothing whatever to say. You may go ahead with your work, just as soon as you like."

"All right; Sam, climb the tree and put the end of the rope over the limb. We will soon put an end to this rebel!"

But the lieutenant was destined to meet with a surprise.

Dick Slater was not the kind of a young man to stand still and permit himself to be hung, so long as there was the faintest chance to escape such a fate. His arms were bound, true, and there was a noose around his neck, but no one had hold of the rope, and only one man had hold of his arm. There was a chance to make a break for liberty, and Dick was the youth to improve it. The lieutenant was standing right in front of the prisoner, and suddenly Dick shook the hold of the man at his side loose and ducking his head, butted the officer in the stomach, knocking him down; then the youth bounded away, down the mounstainside, the rope trailing along behind him like some long, slender serpent.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CAVE.

Dick Slater knew that he was going to have a hard time making his escape, if he did make it, but this did not matter. He went right ahead with as much confidence as if he was sure of succeeding.

Onward he bounded, down the mountainside, dodging the trees and hoping that he would be able to get away from his enemies, and after him came the redcoats, yelling at the top of their voices, and one or two of them fired shots at the fugitive, with their pistols.

Had Dick's arms been free he would have had no difficulty in making his escape, but with them fettered he was badly handicapped. Then, too, the rope trailing behind him was a hindrance. It caught on stones and underbrush, and jerked the youth several times, but he paid no attention, gritting his teeth and continuing the mad rush down the mountainside.

"Stop! stop!" yelled the lieutenant, who had regained his feet, and, boiling with rage, was in full pursuit and had gotten ahead of his comrades. "Halt, or you are a dead man! You cannot escape!"

But Dick did not stop. "I wonder what he takes me for, anyway?" the youth said to himself. "If I were to

stop it would be sure death; but if I keep on I have at least a faint chance for escape. That is just as brilliant as many of those British under officers are."

The youth was such a splendid runner and was so accustomed to timber and hills that even though handicapped in such a manner he was drawing slowly but surely away from his pursuers.

Suddenly Dick stumbled and fell and then he was brought to a stop with a jerk. He scrambled up and attempted to run, but could not; the end of the rope was caught and the noose around his neck held him and choked him, too.

The youth thought that it was all up with him. The redcoats would be upon him before he could hope to get loose, and continue the flight. But even as this thought flashed through his mind a dark form appeared at his side. Something bright flashed in the faint light and Dick felt that the rope holding him back had been severed.

"This way, quick!" whispered a voice, and with a thrill Dick recognized it as being the voice of Lucy Lockhart.

As the girl spoke she took hold of Dick's arm and led him hastily along the side of the mountain, at right angles with the course he had been going.

There was need for haste and caution, for the redcoats were close at hand.

Lucy, however, did not go far before coming to a stop, and she pulled some bushes aside, revealing the opening to a cave in the face of the mountain.

"Enter," she whispered; "have no fear. I know the interior of the cave like a book, and there are no pitfalls."

The youth obeyed, entering unhesitatingly. The girl followed quickly, and as the bushes swept back into place, covering the entrance to the cave, they heard the voices of the redcoats raised in loud exclamations of surprise.

"They've found the rope!" whispered the girl.

"And are surprised to find that it has been cut," replied Dick.

This was indeed the case. The lieutenant himself had got his foot tangled in the rope and had almost been thrown. He disentangled his foot and examined the rope, and was able to determine that it had been cut with a knife. This, of course, occasioned him considerable surprise, and he asked his comrades, who had come up, what they thought of the matter.

"It looks as if the scoundrel had found a friend or some friends," said one.

"You are right!" from the lieutenant; "and as we cannot hear the sound of footsteps anywhere, I am confident they are in hiding near this spot."

"Then the thing for us to do is to hunt them out."

"So it is. Spread out, boys, and begin searching!"

Then Dick and the girl heard the sound of footsteps. The girl had already cut the rope binding the youth's arms and he had removed the noose from his neck. He felt much better and more able to take care of himself, but still he was in poor shape to stand off four redcoats, for he had no weapons. The lieutenant and his comrades had taken Dick's sword and pistols away from him when they made him a prisoner.

"Do you think there is any danger that they will discover our hiding place?" whispered Dick.

"I hardly think they will do so, but they may," was the reply.

"Well, if they do I shall be in trouble, for I have no weapons."

"Here is a pistol, and this knife, too, may be of service to you."

"Yes, yes; anything will be better than nothing," was the reply; "if they find us I will make it as warm for them as I can, even though short on weapons."

The sound of footsteps came closer and closer, and presently the two heard a voice say:

"Here are some bushes; maybe he is hidden behind them."

There was a rustling sound, silence for a few seconds, followed by an exclamation.

"Oh, lieutenant!" called a voice, seemingly close to the youth and the girl. "Come here!"

"He has discovered the entrance to the cave!" whispered Dick.

"So he has!" in a frightened whisper.

"I fear they may take it into their heads to fire into the cave and some of the bullets might hit you!"

"There is a bend in the cave back a little way; we can withdraw to it."

"That's a good plan."

"What do you want, Sam?" the two heard the voice of the lieutenant reply, coming from quite a distance, seemingly.

"Come here; I've found something!"

"You have?"

"Yes."

"What—the rebel?"

"No; but I think I've found his hiding place!"

"You do?" eagerly.

"Yes."

"What is it you have found, anyway?"

"A cave!"

"A cave?"

"Yes."

"Jove! then the chances are that you have found his hiding place, sure enough!"

"I have no doubt of it."

"This way, boys!" called out the lieutenant, and presently the four redcoats were gathered at the entrance to the cave and were peering in with eager eyes. It was so dark in the cave, however, that they could not see anything.

"Hello, in there!" called out the lieutenant, after a few minutes.

Of course, Dick did not reply.

"Hello, I say!" the officer called out. "We have you cooped up in there; you can't escape, so might as well come out and surrender!"

Still no reply. This made the officer angry, and he said to his men:

"Out with your pistols, boys, and fire a volley into the cave! If he won't talk we'll make him move, anyway!"

The four men drew pistols and fired a volley into the cave, but thanks to the foresight of Dick, who had taken this into consideration, no harm was done; the two fugitives being out of danger around a bend in the cave.

The four remained silent for a minute, listening, in the hope that they might hear the sound of dying struggles of the young man who had escaped from their hands, but no such sound came to their hearing.

"Maybe we were mistaken, after all," said one of the men.

"I don't think so," said the lieutenant; "I am sure he is in here."

"But we forgot, lieutenant, there must be at least one person in there with him."

"True; and I wonder who it can be?"

"Not Sim Harper, that's certain. For he is loyal to the core."

"Yer right," said a voice; "as a dark form loomed up in the darkness alongside them; 'et hain't Sim Harper, an' he is loyal ter ther core. But I think thet I know who et is."

"Mr. Harper!" exclaimed the lieutenant.

"Yes, et's me."

"And you think you know who it is that is with the rebel?"

"I do."

"Who?"

"My niece!"

"What!" gasped the lieutenant. "You don't mean it?"

"I sartinly do!"

"What makes you think your niece, Miss Lockhart, is with the rebel?"

"Waal, ef ennybuddy is with 'im, I think et is her, fur she hain't at ther house."

"She isn't?"

"No; when I heerd ther firin' uv ther pistols, she cum downstairs all dressed, an' she axed me whut ther shootin' wuz erbout. I tol her I didn' know, an' ther nex' thing I knowed she hed disappeared, an' when me an' ther ole womern looked fur her we couldn' fin' her."

"And you think she hastened up here and that it was she who met him and freed him from the rope we had placed around his neck?"

"Ef ennybuddy done thet she's ther wun, an' ye kin bet on et."

"Well, some one did meet him and free him from the rope, and we think they are both in this cave."

"It hain't er bit uv doubt erbout thet ef Lucy is with 'im, fur she knows all erbout this heer cave."

"She does?"

"Yes; she used ter play house in this heer cave when she wuz er leetle gal."

"Then it is she who is with him, and they are in the cave!"

There was anger and bitter, jealous rage in the tones of the lieutenant's voice.

"I don' doubt et er bit, lieutenant."

"Jove! what if we killed them both when we fired into the cave?"

"Ye needn' be afeerd uv thet," with a laugh.

"Why not?" from the lieutenant.

"Becos ther cave bends aroun', an' they air around out uv range, ye may be shore."

"So that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm glad to know that now that we know Lucy is with him, for we don't want to injure her."

"No, uv course not."

"But I don't see what the girl wanted to act the traitress for by aiding that scoundrelly rebel!" growled the lieutenant.

"Waal, ye see et wuz this way," said Mr. Harper: "Lucy owes her life ter ther feller—ye know, he shot an' killed a painter thet wuz erbout ter nab her—an' she felt like she orter do sumthin' fur 'im in return."

"Perhaps you are right."

"I'm shore uv et."

"Say, Mr. Harper," said the lieutenant, a hopeful tone

to his voice, "do you think it possible that you can persuade your niece to come out of there?"

"Mebby I kin."

"Try it, anyway; for we are going to go in there after the rebel and if he shows fight the girl must get hurt."

"Thet's so."

"Yes, get her to come out; we don't want to run any risks of hurting her."

"All right; I'll try, but I dunno whether she'll come er not. She's purty middlin' stubborn when she makes up her min' ter be."

Then the man raised his voice and called out:

"Lucy!"

There was no reply.

After a few moments Mr. Harper tried again.

"Lucy! Oh, Lucy!" he called.

Still no reply.

"Ye hed better cum outer theer, Lucy," the man called out; "ther lieutenant an' his men air goin' ter cum in theer an' git ther rebel, an' ef he shows fight, an' theer is er scrimmage, ye mought git hurt. Come out, gal!"

This time there was a reply.

"I will not come out, uncle!" was the reply, in a firm, determined voice.

"You won't?" in surprise.

"No."

"Ye hed better."

"No."

"Whut d'ye wanter stay in theer fur?" the man asked.

"I have a reason."

"So I s'posed; but whut is et?"

"Well, it is easily told: This gentleman, whom the lieutenant and his men are trying to capture and put to death, saved my life yesterday evening and I am not going to do anything to in any way aid them to be successful."

"How would you be helpin' 'em ef ye wuz ter cum out?"

"Why, then they could rush in and attack him without being afraid of injuring me; but if I stay here I do not think they will be brutes enough to make the attempt, when they know beforehand that they may kill a woman by so doing."

"Curses on the stubborn girl!" the lieutenant muttered.

"Then ye won't cum out, Lucy?" the uncle called.

"No."

"All right, then; yer blood will be on yer own head, fur ther lieutenant is goin' ter capter ther rebel, no matter whut happens."

"Very well, uncle. If the lieutenant wishes to act like a brute and a coward, let him! One thing is sure, he will

find that we are not defenseless. We have weapons, and I am enough of a mountain girl to know how to use them. And I will help fight the lieutenant and his men."

A curse escaped the lips of the lieutenant.

"That is the biggest fool of a girl that I ever heard of!" he growled.

"She means whut she says, though," said Mr. Harper; "I guess, lieutenant, thet ye hev yer work all cut out fur ye, an' thet ef ye succeed in gittin' thet young feller erg'in ye'll be doin' mighty well."

"Here, you rebel!" called out the officer, "what kind of a man do you call yourself, anyway, to hide behind a woman's skirts in this fashion? Why don't you send the girl out of harm's way, and do your own fighting like a man?"

"That is exactly what I have been trying to get Miss Lucy to do, lieutenant," was the quiet reply, in the voice of Dick Slater. "I do not care to hide behind a woman's skirts, as you call it; and indeed I do not think it necessary in this instance. I haven't the least doubt of my ability to whip all four of you, alone and unaided."

Exclamations of anger escaped the lips of the redcoats.

"Say, he's altogether too saucy!" growled one.

"He needs a lesson!" from another.

"We'll give it to him before we get through with him, too!" from the third.

"Oh, you think you could whip all four of us, do you?" cried the lieutenant, sneeringly.

"Oh, yes; and do it without much trouble, too!"

"Then come out and do it!"

"Oh, no, thank you; I am not anxious to bring on a combat, but if you fellows attack me you may be sure that you are going to have all you can do, and more, too!"

"What had we better do?" asked the lieutenant, in a low tone.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied one of the men.

"You can't prove it by me," from another.

"Don't you suppose we could crawl into the cave and get right onto him before he knew of our coming?" asked the third.

"What do you think about it, Mr. Harper?" the lieutenant asked.

"Waal, I dunno whut ter think erbout et, lieutenant," was the reply; "mebby ye mought do et, all right, an' then ag'in mebby ye moughtn't."

"Why not starve them out?" suggested one of the men, struck suddenly by a happy thought.

"That would take too long; we haven't time to fool away like that," the lieutenant replied.

"Then there is only the one thing to do."

"And that is to try to crawl into the cave and attack the rebel suddenly, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, we'll make the attempt. Are you boys ready?"

"Yes."

"All right; come on, then. Follow me and make no noise, on your lives!"

The lieutenant entered the cave, crawling on his hands and knees, and the three dragoons followed. They made their way slowly and carefully along, their nerves strung to the highest tension.

Would they succeed in taking the "rebel" youth by surprise?

This was the question they were asking themselves, but had they known who the "rebel" really was that they were going to try to take by surprise, they would not have needed to ask themselves the question.

Dick Slater, with the eyes and ears of an Indian, or of the wild inhabitants of the forests, was not the youth to be taken by surprise by a quartette of blundering redcoats.

CHAPTER VII.

DICK WOUNDS TWO OF HIS ENEMIES.

Dick Slater was on the alert.

He became suspicious during the time that the men were discussing the matter of trying to crawl into the cave and surprise him, and he whispered to Lucy that they were up to some kind of mischief.

"They are laying their plans for the attack," he whispered.

"I judge that you are right," was the reply.

"I am going to ask you once more, Miss Lucy, to go forth from here," said Dick; "you have done enough for me, and more than enough, and I would never forgive myself if you should be injured as a result of your befriending me. Please let me call to them and tell them that you will come out."

"No, no," was the quick reply; "I would rather die here with you than to go forth to where Lieutenant Marvin is. I hate him, and he keeps forcing his attentions upon me. I will remain here and take all risks cheerfully, even gladly, since I think that by staying I lessen the danger to you in some degree."

"Very well; just as you will, Miss Lucy."

The two said no more just then, and Dick busied himself listening as that was the only way he could give a guess regarding what the enemy was doing.

Presently he whispered to Lucy:

"They are coming, Miss Lucy!"

"Coming?" in a trembling whisper.

"Yes."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; I can hear them."

"You can?"

"Yes; they have entered the cave and are crawling toward us!"

"Goodness! Then it looks as if we would have to fight them, after all."

"So we will unless there is some way of getting out of the cave—some other way besides the one we came in, I mean."

An exclamation escaped the lips of the girl.

"That makes me think!" she whispered. "There is a passage—a narrow, crooked one, which leaves the main cave and leads I know not whither. I have followed it quite a ways, but not to the end, and I have no idea where it really leads to. But in a matter of life or death, like this, it doesn't matter where it leads to, so it is to some place that takes us out of danger from the enemy."

"You are right," said Dick; "we will take refuge in the passage you speak of and will follow it to its end, if need be, and see where it leads to."

"Come," whispered the girl; "let us go at once."

"We need not hurry, Miss Lucy; they are coming, but very slowly, and I have a mind to give them a shot or two before retreating."

"Perhaps it will be as well not to anger them more," the girl suggested.

"Oh, that doesn't matter, Miss Lucy; they are as angry as they can be already; but if I wound one or two of them it will dampen their ardor considerable and may have the effect of causing them to give up trying to capture me."

"That's so; I never thought of that, and by being careful you may fire upon them and yet not be in any danger when they return the fire."

"You are right; all I will have to do is to keep back behind the angle of the cave wall."

The "Liberty Boy" drew his pistol, and, cocking it, listened intently. He had no difficulty in determining the whereabouts of the enemy. He could hear the four dragging themselves laboriously forward on their hands and knees. So far as the secrecy of their movements were concerned they might as well have walked boldly in and talked

their plans aloud as they came; but of course they did not know this.

Dick listened intently for a few moments and then leveled his pistol and fired.

Crack! the weapon rang out loudly, awakening the echoes in the cave and causing a noise that was almost deafening.

Following the sound of the report was a loud yell of pain, followed by a string of curses that was enough to curdle the blood of the hearers.

"Are you badly hurt, Sam?" called out the lieutenant.

"Oh, it won't kill me, I guess," was the reply; "but it hurts a bit. The scoundrel has put a bullet through my arm."

"Give him a volley!" roared the lieutenant.

"But—the girl!" said one of the dragoons, more of a man than the officer.

"Never mind the girl!" hissed the lieutenant. "She chose to stay in here with the rebel; let her take the medicine along with him. Ready, fire!"

Crack! crack! crack! rang out three pistol shots.

Needless to say, none of the bullets inflicted damage on Dick or the girl. They were out of harm's way, around the angle of the cave wall.

"Do you suppose we hit either of them?" said one of the dragoons.

"I don't know," the lieutenant replied; "I don't hear any sound, so it is possible that we killed both of them."

"I hope not!" muttered the redcoat who had objected to firing for fear the girl might be hit. "I'd hate to go through life thinking that I had fired a shot that had killed an innocent girl."

"What was the reason you didn't fire, Sam?" asked the lieutenant.

"It is my right arm that has the bullet through it," was the growling reply; "and as I couldn't hit the side of a house at five paces, left-handed, I thought I might as well save my powder."

"Oh, that was it?" Then raising his voice the officer called out:

"How is it with you, Rebel? Are you dead?"

"Oh, no," was the prompt reply, "I'm not dead nor even so much as wounded. You fellows are not such good shots in the dark as I am. I'm going to give you another shot, now, and I think I will get you, this time, lieutenant."

A curse escaped the lips of the officer.

"That fellow has Satan's luck!" he growled. Then aloud:

"Shoot! Who cares? You couldn't hit me in a hundred attempts, and you may rest assured of one thing

When I get hold of you again, as I will very soon, I will make you suffer for all the trouble you have caused us!"

Crack!

As the lieutenant ceased speaking Dick fired, and the bullet, by good luck more than by good shooting, as the youth had only the sound of the voice to guide him, struck the lieutenant in the right shoulder, inflicting a painful but not at all dangerous flesh wound.

It was sufficient to arouse all the demon there was in the lieutenant's make-up, however, and that was not a little. He gave utterance to a string of curses that were something terrible to listen to, and when he had finished he gave the order to charge.

"Up and at the scoundrel, boys!" he cried. "We will overpower him before he has time to reload his pistols!"

But Dick and the girl had not been idle while the lieutenant was relieving his feelings by cursing. The two had taken advantage of the opportunity and had withdrawn to the farther end of the cave, and after a few moments of search the passageway was found and then they made their way along this.

"We need not hurry, Miss Lucy," said Dick; "walk slowly and I will reload my pistol as we go."

"Very well, Mr. Martin," was the reply.

Then they heard the lieutenant give the order for his men to charge, and Dick said:

"I guess they will be surprised when they find us missing."

"Yes, indeed; but they will come in pursuit, will they not?"

"Doubtless; but they won't be able to catch us, I feel sure."

"I hope that will be the case."

"How far have you explored this passageway, Miss Lucy?"

"Not very far; about to where we now are, I should say."

"Well, I hope that the passage will be found to extend to the outer world."

"So do I."

"In that case we will be able to laugh at our enemies."

"Yes, you will be enabled to escape from them and they will not harm me."

"You had better go slow and feel your way, Miss Lucy; there might be some pitfalls in the way of precipices in our path."

"I shall be careful."

The two continued onward and presently Lucy came to a stop, with a cry of dismay.

"What is the trouble?" asked Dick.

"We have come to the end of the passageway!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPE.

The lieutenant and his three comrades rushed forward, their nerves strung up to the highest pitch, expecting every moment to encounter the "rebel" who had caused them so much trouble, but they came to the wall of the cave without having encountered the object of their search.

"What does this mean?" the lieutenant exclaimed. "Where is that scoundrelly rebel?"

"Here, lieutenant!" called one of the men. "The cave turns to the left and he must be back in here further."

"Spread out so as not to give him any chance to get past us and make his escape," the lieutenant ordered, and the three dragoons obeyed.

They then made their way, slowly and cautiously back toward the rear of the cave and finally they reached it—without having found the youth and the girl.

"What does it mean?" the officer cried, in angry and disappointed tones. "Where can they have gone?"

"I give it up," replied the wounded dragoon, in a tone of disgust.

"And so do I," from another of the trio.

"Here!" suddenly exclaimed the third, who had been nosing around. "I've found something!"

"What?" the lieutenant cried.

"A passageway."

"You have?"

"Yes; it leads onward from the end of the cave, and I'll wager that the rebel and the girl have taken refuge in it."

"Of course that is where they have gone. And now, if the passageway doesn't lead to the outer world, we will be able to corner them and capture them."

"Yes; they will never be able to get past us in as narrow a passageway as that."

"Come along, boys!" the lieutenant said, a note of satisfaction in his voice; "I guess this is nearing the finish. I think we will soon find our game."

The four entered the passageway, and made their way along it at a moderate rate of speed. They did not deem it necessary to hurry, for they felt confident that they would soon be up with the fugitives, anyway."

At last they came to a point where the passageway ended, and the fugitives were not there. There was no mistaking the fact that the passage came to an abrupt end, for it ran right up against a solid rock wall.

"Well, what do you think of this, anyway, boys?" asked the lieutenant, in disgust.

"I don't know."

"It beats me!"

"Perhaps the rebel and the girl didn't enter the passageway, after all."

"Then where did they go?" the lieutenant wanted to know, and this question neither of the three could answer.

"You can't prove it by me."

"Nor by me."

"I give it up, lieutenant. I don't understand it; I don't see how they could have got past us in the cave proper, and I am certain they could not have got past us in this narrow passage."

"You are right; but perhaps there are some branch passages, and they have turned aside into one of those."

"That is possible," agreed one of the dragoons, "but I don't think it probable, for we felt our way along and surely we would have found a side passage, had there been any."

"We might have missed it. I can't account for the disappearance of the rebel and the girl in any other way."

"Well, let's hasten back, making search for it as we go; for if we fool away too much time here they will have a chance to get back into this passage and back to the cave and out."

This was considered to be such sound sense that it was acted upon at once. The four made their way back, feeling along the sides of the passageway in the expectation that they would find a branch one leading off to one side.

They were disappointed, however, for no branch passage was found, and they reached the main cave, feeling bewildered and puzzled.

"I don't understand it," said the lieutenant. "Where can they have gone?"

"I don't know," replied one of the dragoons; "perhaps they are in the cave, within a few yards or feet of us."

"Let us make a systematic search of the cave and see if they are here," the officer said, and they went to work. They searched thoroughly, but found no traces of the fugitives. Then they made their way to the open air and found Mr. Harper there. To the lieutenant's query regarding whether he had seen anything of the youth and the girl, the man replied that he had not.

"They didn't come out this way, ef thet's whut ye mean,"

was the reply; "ye don' mean ter say ez how ye couldn' find 'em in ther cave?"

"That is just what I do mean to say."

"Waal, thet beats ennythin' I ever heerd uv!"

"It seems rather strange, that's a fact."

"They mus' be in theer."

"You think so?"

"Uv course they air. They wuz in theer, we know thet, an' I know thet they hevn't cum out."

"But there may be some other way of getting out of the cave."

"I don' think so. I think thet ef thet wuz so Lucy would hev foun' et long ergo."

"That's just it; I think she found it long ago and made use of it to-night."

"I don' think thet, fur ef she'd hev foun' another way uv gittin' out uv ther cave she'd hev tole us."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm shore uv et."

"Well, I don't know; it looks to me as if you are mistaken, for we searched every foot of the cave, and a passageway that extends away back from the rear of the cave, but we couldn't find the rebel and the girl."

"I've heerd Lucy speak uv ther passageway, but she said she hedn't never gone back ter ther end uv et, an' didn' know whur et went."

"Well, we went clear to the end of it and it came to an end at a solid wall of stone."

"Ye don' say?"

"Yes."

"Waal, et beats me; I don' know whur ther two kin hev gone."

"Neither do I—but I wish I did!"

The lieutenant was angry and disgusted. He had had the "rebel" in his power and almost hanged, yet the young stranger had escaped and he had wounded two of his enemies, the lieutenant being one of the two. The wound in the shoulder was quite painful, and the officer presently said they might as well go to the house.

"Sam and I are wounded," he said; "and I can say for myself that my shoulder hurts like everything. It burns like fire, and the quicker the wound is dressed the better I shall be pleased."

"My arm hurts, too," said Sam.

"All right; come erlong ter ther house," said Mr. Harper, "an' we'll fix ye up ther bes' we kin, though I dunno how good thet'll be."

The five made their way down the mountainside and were soon at the house. They entered and preparations were

begun for dressing the wounds of the two men. While this is being done we will see what has become of Dick and Lucy.

When they found that they were up against a solid stone wall the fugitives hardly knew what to think or say.

"This is a pretty bad lookout for us," said Dick, somewhat soberly.

"Do you think they will find the passageway?" asked Lucy, anxiously.

"I'm afraid they will, Miss Lucy."

"And it will lead them straight to us."

"Yes."

"What will we do, then?"

"Well, I won't wait for them to come here where there will be danger that they may wound or kill you, Miss Lucy; I will make my way back along the passageway and will have it out with them where there will be no danger to you."

"Oh, but there may be some way of getting out of this place without meeting them; there must be a way. Perhaps there is a continuance of this passageway at a higher level."

"That is well thought of, Miss Lucy. Such might be the case; but how are we to learn whether or not it is? We have nothing to stand on to make the examination."

"I am very strong, Mr. Martin," in eager tones; "can you not stand on my shoulders?"

"You brave, noble-hearted little girl!" said Dick, in tones of admiration. "You are a girl in a thousand. But I am much more able to hold you up than you are to hold me. Get up on my shoulders."

"But if there is a continuation, and I should be able to get up into it myself, I would not be strong enough to lift you up afterward, while if you were to get up you could lift me up easily."

"That is true; but you get up on my shoulders first and make the examination and then if there is no continuation of the passageway there will be no necessity for me to get on your shoulders."

"Very well."

The youth lifted the girl as easily as if she were a child, and placed her on his shoulders; standing erect the girl reached up and felt around, and as she did so a little cry of joy escaped her lips.

"It is here!" she cried. "There is a continuance of the passageway here!"

"How high up is it, Miss Lucy?"

"It is almost as high up as I can reach, Mr. Martin."

"Then I guess I will have to stand on your shoulder and make the attempt to get up there, Miss Lucy."

"Yes, yes!" and the girl leaped down. "I can hold you never fear. I am very strong for a girl."

The youth quickly removed his shoes, so as not to bruise the girl's shoulders, and then climbed up onto Lucy's shoulders. It tried the girl's strength, but she stood resolutely firm, and Dick reached up and got hold of the edge of the rock, which, fortunately, was sharp and firm and taking a good grip he drew himself upward, slowly but steadily and surely.

It was a difficult feat, but Dick felt that his life and the safety of the girl depended on his succeeding, and he never for a moment contemplated such a thing as failure. He simply told himself that he must succeed, and he did so. He managed to draw himself up far enough so that he could whirl around and secure a sitting position, and when he had done this he was all right.

He rested a few moments and then climbed up and found himself in a passageway almost exactly like the one below. Kneeling, he called down to Lucy to throw his shoes up.

"I am here, safe and sound," he said, "and I will have you up here in a jiffy."

"Oh, I am so glad!" the girl exclaimed, and then she threw Dick's shoes up to him.

Then Dick lay down on his stomach and reached down as far as he could.

"Give me your hands, Miss Lucy," he said, "and I will soon have you up here beside me."

The girl reached up as high as she could and Dick could just reach the tips of her fingers.

"That won't do," the youth said.

"What are we to do?" the girl asked, in a trembling voice.

"It is very simple, Miss Lucy," was the reply; "jump upward. Don't try to jump high—just about six inches—that is all, and that will enable me to get a good hold on your hands."

The girl did as told, and Dick got a good hold and pulled her up without much difficulty, and soon she was seated in the passageway beside him.

"Now I will don my shoes," said Dick, "and we will be ready to continue exploring the passageway and see where it leads to."

The youth had just finished this work when Lucy said in a cautious whisper: "Listen! I hear voices and foot steps."

They listened intently for a few moments and then Dick said:

"You were right, Miss Lucy; the redcoats have found the passageway and are coming along it."

"Oh, let us hasten away from here!" the girl whispered, in a frightened way.

"No, we won't do that," was the reply; "I don't think they will discover that there is a continuation of the passageway, and if they should do so——"

"What?"

"Then the best place for me is right here."

"I don't see how that can be."

"You don't?"

"No."

"It is very simple; they will have as much difficulty in getting up here as I had, if not interfered with; and with me here to bother them, why——"

"What?"

"A hundred of them could not force their way up."

"Ah, you think you can keep them from getting up, even if they make the attempt to get at us?"

"I know that I can; but if we were to go on our way and let them get up and into this passageway, and we should find a point where we would be able to proceed beyond, then it would be all up with us—or at least I would have to fight them at a big disadvantage."

"You are right; I think it will be safest and best to stay right here."

"Yes; only you may retire ten or a dozen feet so as to be out of harm's way. It will give me more room to work in, too, in case they try to get up here."

"Very well."

The girl withdrew a distance of two or three yards and then they waited and listened in silence.

They heard the four redcoats approaching, heard them stop at the stone barrier and heard their conversation there. As we know, the four British soldiers did not think to try to discover whether or not the passageway continued at another level, but returned to the entrance to the cave, where Mr. Harper was stationed, and a little later to the settler's house.

When the four had gone, Dick said to Lucy:

"What shall we do—continue onward and try to find another exit, or wait a while and go back and out the way we came in?"

"I hardly know," was the reply. "Don't you think the lieutenant will keep watch over the entrance to the cave?"

"I think it likely he will do so."

"Then perhaps we had better go on and try to find another exit."

"I judge that will be safest; anyway, if we don't find an exit we can come back and go out the way we came in and take our chances of being seen."

"True."

"Well, we will be moving. I will go in front so that if there are any abysses to fall into I will be the one to tumble."

"Go slowly," said Lucy, "and there will be no danger of falling."

They set out, Dick in front, and after a walk of ten minutes emerged from the cave—the passage having widened suddenly into a cave—and found themselves on the mountainside, but at a point two hundred yards away from the other entrance.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Lucy. "I know where we are, but I never thought of looking for a cave entrance here."

"That was because you had already found the one and did not think that there might be another."

"I guess that was the reason."

"Yes."

"And now what are you going to do?" asked Lucy.

"That is just what I am considering," was the reply; "do you think the redcoats will stay all night at your uncle's, Miss Lucy?"

"I am afraid they will."

"I rather think so, myself, as the lieutenant and one of his men are wounded. The wounds are not serious, I am certain, but they are doubtless painful, and the two men will not feel like riding back to Ninety-Six."

"No, I am sure they will remain; and they may have hopes of capturing you even yet."

"Well, we will fool them."

"I hope so."

"Miss Lucy, while your uncle is a loyalist, I am inclined to believe that you lean the other way; am I right?"

"You are!" was the decided reply. "I have a girl friend who lives about a mile from here. Her folks are strong patriots, and I have heard them talk and have heard uncle talk, and have given the matter considerable thought, with the result that I believe the people of America ought to be free and independent."

"Good for you, Miss Lucy! You are a brave, true-hearted little patriot, and I am going to tell you a secret."

"What is it, Mr. Martin?" eagerly.

"First—that my name is not Martin."

"Your name isn't Martin?"

"No."

"Then what is it?"

"Dick Slater."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" APPEAR.

An exclamation of amazement escaped the girl's lips.

"I've heard uncle speak of you many a time!" she cried, eagerly.

"You have?"

"Yes."

"What did he say about me?"

"Oh, he said you were one of the most daring and dangerous rebels in the country, and that he was glad you and your 'Liberty Boys' were in the North instead of in the South."

"Well, as you see, I am in the South, now, and my 'Liberty Boys' are not far away."

"Oh, are they with you?"

"They are back about twenty miles. I came on ahead on a tour of investigation."

"I see."

"And, now, do you know what I have a mind to do, Miss Lucy?"

"No; what?"

"I think that I shall get my horse and ride back to where my 'Liberty Boys' are encamped."

"And then what?"

"I will have them mount and come here."

"Yes?"

"And if we get here in time we will make prisoners of Lieutenant Marvin and his three men."

"Goodness! I wish you would do that, and that you would hold the lieutenant a prisoner so long that he would give up all idea of bothering me with his attentions."

"You really do not like him, then?"

"I hate him!"

"Good! Then I will put my plan into operation, and, Miss Lucy, I have one hundred young fellows of about my own age, each and every one of whom is brave and noble-hearted; many of them are handsome, too, and you shall have your pick of them. I promise you that you will be pleased, for they are young fellows whom any girl might be proud to have for a sweetheart."

The girl was silent for a few moments, and then said, in a low, almost tremulous voice: "What if I—if I should pick upon—upon you?"

Dick started and a feeling of pain shot through him. "I never thought of that," he said to himself, in dismay. "What if she has taken a liking to me? I hope not!" Then aloud he said:

"You are just joking, Miss Lucy. I did not include myself, as I am already spoken for. I have a sweetheart up in New York State, so we will be brother and sister."

"Yes, we can be—sister and—and brother," was the reply, and there was such a sad cadence to the girl's voice that Dick drew her gently to him, gave her a kiss and said:

"You are the best and bravest little sister any fellow ever had, and when you see my 'Liberty Boys,' you will not care that I was not included among them, for there are some of the handsomest and finest-looking as well as the best and noblest young fellows among them that can be imagined."

"Perhaps you are right," was the reply, but the tone said as plainly as words could have done that the girl did not think this.

"And now to make an attempt to get my horse and get away in safety," said Dick.

"I hope you will be successful," said Lucy.

"I hope so; but what about you? Will you go to the house?"

"No, I'm not going there while Lieutenant Marvin is there, if I can help myself."

"What will you do?"

"I will go to the home of the friend I spoke of a few minutes ago."

"That is a good idea. I will accompany you; come."

"There is no need of that, Mr. Slater."

"Call me Dick."

"Very well—Dick."

"I will accompany you, Lucy, as there might be more panthers in the neighborhood."

"Very well, if you think you can spare the time, Dick."

"Oh, I can spare the time. I have a very speedy horse, and I can get to the camp of the 'Liberty Boys,' and we can get back here by morning, easily."

The two set out and a walk of twenty minutes brought them to a farmhouse at the foot of the mountain. It did not take long to rouse the people up and explain the situation, and they were only too glad to have Lucy stay there. This settled, Dick bade them good-night and took his departure.

He walked rapidly and was back at the home of Mr. Harper in less than twenty minutes. He reconnoitred a few minutes, and finding everything quiet, entered the

stable, bridled and saddled Major, led him out of the stable and out to the road, mounted and rode away toward the north.

He rode at a swift pace, and two hours and a half later was at the encampment of the "Liberty Boys."

The youths gave Dick a joyous welcome, and crowded around him, asking questions, for they knew he had not returned to camp at this hour of the night—or rather morning—for nothing.

He quickly explained and then the "Liberty Boys" proceeded to break camp. They rolled up their blankets, bridled and saddled their horses and within half an hour of the time Dick arrived at the encampment the entire force of one hundred was riding away toward the south.

They rode at a good pace, but it was daylight while yet they were five miles away from the home of the Tory, Harper.

"I'm afraid we won't get there in time to catch the lieutenant and his three men," said Dick.

"You think they will be up and away early, eh, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"Yes; you see, the lieutenant himself and one of his men are wounded, and they will be for getting back to Ninety-Six as quickly as possible."

"Oh, well, maybe they won't be gone."

"I hope not."

They rode steadily onward at a gallop and although the road was rough and hilly they came in sight of the Tory's house, three-quarters of an hour later. The house was still a mile distant, however, and almost the whole of the mile was down the mounstainside.

The youths were forced to slacken the speed of their horses to a walk, and when they were half way down the mountainside they saw the four redcoats emerge from the house. The four must have seen the "Liberty Boys," for they hastened to the stable and very soon reappeared, leading their horses. They led the animals out into the road in front of the house, and after looking up the mountainside to where the force of "Liberty Boys" could be seen moving slowly downward, they mounted their horses and rode away at a gallop.

"We are too late," said Dick; "they have gotten away and by the time we get down to the level they will have secured such a start that we could not overhaul them before they reach Ninety-Six."

"That is too bad!" said Bob.

Ten minutes later the force came to a stop in front of the home of Mr. Harper. He happened to come out on

the porch as they rode up, and he stared in open-mouthed amazement.

"Good morning, Mr. Harper," said Dick, cheerfully. "It's a beautiful morning, isn't it?"

"Yas, et's er nice mornin', thet's er fack," was the reply, without taking his eyes off the force of "Liberty Boys," although Dick had dismounted, entered the yard and was advancing toward the porch.

"What would be the chance for my men to get something to eat here, Mr. Harper?"

"Yer men?" The words escaped the man's lips mechanically.

"Yes. Did you think I was down here in these parts all alone, Mr. Harper?"

"Waal, I didn' know; but who—who air these—these young fellers, ennyway?"

"Did you ever hear of 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' Mr. Harper?"

The man started and turned a pair of startled eyes on Dick.

"Ye don' mean ter say thet—thet——"

"Those young men are 'The Liberty Boys of '76,' yes."

"Then who in blazes air you?"

"Me?"

"Yas."

"I'm Dick Slater."

"Ye don' mean ter say thet ye air Dick Slater, ther captin uv ther 'Liberty Boys'?"

"Yes. What of it?"

"Nothin'; only I unnerstan' now why et wuz thet ye got ther better uv Lieutenant Marvin an' his three men las' night."

"You think you understand it, eh?"

"Yas; but say, whur's Lucy?"

"She went to the home of a neighbor—I don't know what the neighbor's name is."

"I know; I s'posed she went theer. She don' like ther lieutenant, an' went theer ter keep frum havin' ter be around' 'im, I s'pose."

"I don't know; that may have been her reason. At any rate, I don't blame her if she don't like the lieutenant, for he is about as big a scoundrel as ever I ran across, and the next time we meet there is going to be a vacancy in the ranks of the under officers of the British army in these parts."

The Tory looked at Dick sharply, but could see only calm, grim determination in the youth's expression. "By thunder, I berleeve he means whut he sez!" he said to himself.

"So ye want sumthin' ter eat, d'ye?" he asked, anxious to do something to earn the good will of the young patriot whom he had heard so much about, and whom he felt certain was a very dangerous fellow, notwithstanding his calm and easy-going manner.

"Yes, we want something to eat, Mr. Harper," was the reply.

"All right; I guess ye kin hev sumthin'."

The horses were taken to a field back of the stable, and were given some hay, and then the youths went to the house. Mrs. Harper cooked as fast as she could, but that would not get the meal over with quickly enough, so the majority of the youths cooked meat and hoecakes at fires built in the back yard.

The youths had just finished eating when one of the "Liberty Boys" who had wandered out to the front yard fence came running back with the information that a strong force of British was coming up the road.

"How many of them do you think there are, Mark?" asked Dick.

"Two or three hundred at the very lowest estimate!"

"Then we must not try to meet them on equal terms," said Dick; "we will make our way up to the top of that mountain, yonder, and we will be able to beat them back if they try to follow us."

"I should think so."

"Yes; every man bring his horse and follow me!"

The youths hastened to the field, untied their horses and then made their way up the mountainside. They had gone a quarter of a mile, perhaps, when the force of redcoats reached the house.

"Who are those fellows, Mr. Harper?" asked Lieutenant Marvin, who had returned with the British force, which had been met three miles away.

"They air ther 'Liberty Boys'!" was the reply.

"The 'Liberty Boys'!" gasped the lieutenant.

"Yas."

"Then we must kill or capture the whole gang!" cried the officer in command, a captain. "Leave your horses here, boys, and charge up the mountainside after the rebels!"

With loud cheers the redcoats proceeded to do as ordered.

CHAPTER X.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS'" "TEN STRIKE."

The "Liberty Boys" heard the cheers, and knew what it meant.

"They are going to come in pursuit of us, boys," said Dick; "well, let them come. They cannot overtake us before we get to the top of the mountain, and I think that we will be able to make it so lively for them when we get up there that they won't care to continue the fight long."

The "Liberty Boys" uttered cheers in their turn, and the British heard and became angry.

"The insolent scoundrels!" cried the captain. "After them, men! Catch them before they get to the top of the mountain, if possible!"

The British soldiers set out on the run, but as soon as they reached the steep side of the mountain they were forced to slow down to a walk—indeed it was more of a climb than they thought, and a very slow and hard one at that.

The captain soon saw that they could not overtake the enemy on the mountainside, but he told his men it did not matter.

"We will get them at the top of the mountain, just the same," he said. "A little delay is all that it amounts to."

Which shows that he did not know much about the "Liberty Boys." There were many officers and men in the British army who could have told him that it would amount to a good deal more than a simple delay.

Even though bothered with their horses the "Liberty Boys" had no difficulty in getting to the top of the mountain before the British were within musket-shot distance of them, and Dick at once began making preparations for receiving the enemy.

The youth took note of the fact that there were numerous large rocks and boulders lying at the top of the mountain and he set the boys to work rolling these rocks and boulders right up to the brink of the steep descent.

"Those will be splendid weapons for us," he said; "we will roll them over and they will go down with terrible force, and woe to the redcoats who are in their way!"

"You are right," agreed Bob Estabrook.

"We will let the redcoats be the ten-pins," said Dick "and we will be the bowlers, while the boulders will be used as balls."

"That's right!" grinned Bob. "And we'll make a ten strike every time!"

"I think, myself, that we will come very near it," agreed Dick.

The redcoats were almost within range, however, and Dick told his "Liberty Boys" to get in position. He had instructed them to take refuge behind the rocks and boulders until after they had fired a volley from their

muskets and two from their pistols. Then the majority were to fall back a short distance and reload, while a score of the youths rolled the stones and boulders down the mountainside.

It was a splendid programme, and was followed to the letter. As soon as the British were in range, Dick told the youths to take careful aim and fire, and they did so, pouring a damaging volley down upon the advancing horde. At least fifty of the enemy went down, dead and wounded, and with wild yells of rage the redcoats fired a volley in return and came charging up the mountainside as rapidly as they could.

This was not very rapid, however, as they were tired, and the way was steep, but they kept on yelling and limbing as fast as they could.

Dick waited till he was sure the enemy was within pistol-shot distance and then he gave the order to fire a volley. This was done, and while not nearly so much damage was done as by the first volley, sufficient was done to make it worth while.

The redcoats were enraged, and yelled like madmen, and they returned the fire; but as the "Liberty Boys" were sheltered behind the rocks and boulders, no particular damage was inflicted by the enemy's bullets.

"Get ready and give them another volley," ordered Dick, and another volley was fired with considerable effect.

"Now fall back and reload the weapons," ordered Dick. Eighty of the youths obeyed the order, thus leaving twenty to attend to the work in hand, which was the work of rolling the rocks and boulders down upon the British.

The work was begun without delay, and when the first boulder went crashing down it mowed a path through the British force and caused a wild scene of death and devastation among the enemy.

The idea of rolling the boulders down upon the British was a splendid one, for every time a boulder went bounding down the mountainside the British were bowled down like ten-pins. It was as Bob had said it would be, a "ten-strike" every time.

This was something that the redcoats had not counted on. It was something against which there was no defense, for when a huge stone or boulder came tearing down it created terrible havoc. Groans, yells and shrieks went up from the wounded and dying, while those who had escaped being hurt gave utterance to curses and kept on trying to get to the top so as to get at the enemy.

By the time all the rocks and boulders had been rolled down the British were within a dozen yards of the top of the mountain. But the "Liberty Boys" had succeeded

in reloading their muskets and pistols by this time and they came forward and poured three volleys, one right after the other right into the faces of the British, this being sufficient to finish the work, for the redcoats, their ranks already cut down to one-half what they had been when they started up the mountain, turned and fled at the top of their speed.

Dick ordered the "Liberty Boys" to charge the redcoats and this, added to their terror and flight, became a rout. They ran like frightened sheep and the majority threw away their muskets and pistols.

Dick recalled the "Liberty Boys" before they had gone far down the mountainside as he had no desire to butcher the enemy, and was a believer in the rule of letting well enough alone.

The redcoats did not stop running till they reached the house of the Tory, Mr. Harper, and here they were gotten together and reviewed by their commander, the captain, who, though wounded in three places, was still able to keep going. Lieutenant Marvin, however, was not among those who had got back to the house. He lay dead on the mountainside.

When the captain saw that he had lost nearly half his entire force of three hundred men in the disastrous charge up the mountainside, he was wild with rage; but what could he do? If he had failed to accomplish anything with three hundred men, what could he hope to do with one hundred and fifty? He was pretty certain, moreover, that his men had not inflicted much damage on the "Liberty Boys." They had been handicapped by having to fire upward, it being hard to get the range, and also by the enemy being ensconced behind large rocks and boulders.

"It is terrible!" he said to Mr. Harper, shaking his head. "I never met with a worse defeat in all my experience as a soldier."

"Them theer 'Liberty Boys' air bad wuns ter fight, I guess," said the man; "I've allers heerd thet they wuz, et enny rate."

"They are demons!" grated the officer. "Yes, they are demons to fight, and they have a commander who is as cunning and resourceful as the Old Nick!"

"Ye mean Dick Slater?"

"Yes; I believe that is his name. I have heard a great deal about him, but I did not believe half of it."

"But ye berleeve et now?"

"I do; and I am willing to believe that the half has not been told."

"Whut air ye goin' ter do, capt'in? Go arter 'em erg'in?" The officer shook his head.

"That would be folly," he said.

"An' ye hain't ergoin' ter try et erg'in?"

"Not a bit of it. All that is worrying me now is how am I to get my wounded down from the mountainside? If we go up there the rebels will shoot us down."

"Mebby not; I've heerd that Dick Slater is er purty fair sort uv er feller, ef ye take 'im right."

"You think he would let me get my men down from there, under a flag of truce?"

"I think he would."

"I'll try it, at any rate."

The officer sent one of his men up the mountainside, carrying a white cloth as a flag of truce, and Dick advanced and met him.

"Our commander wants to know if you will permit him to come up here and bury our dead and remove the wounded?" the redcoat said.

"Certainly," said Dick; "tell him to bring up all his men if he likes, so as to make quick work of it. We have been doing what we can to relieve the sufferings of the ones who are most severely wounded, and we shall be glad to see the poor fellows taken care of."

The man looked surprised.

"You are a pretty good sort of fellow, after all," he said.

"He is that, Shafer!" said a wounded man who lay near. "He has done all he can to make us fellows easier. He has taught me a lesson."

"Hurry back," said Dick, "and get up here as quickly as possible."

The redcoat saluted and hastened back down the mountainside.

"Well?" remarked the captain, inquiringly.

"It's all right, captain; he said bring up all your men and that they will not be fired upon or molested in any way. He and his men have been doing all they can for the boys."

"They have?" in amazement.

"Yes; and the boys speak in praise of the 'Liberty Boys' and their captain."

"Well, well! I'm glad of that; it is only too often that the victors on either side forget humanity, and if they do not go to work and kill the wounded men, pay no attention to them and let them suffer."

"That's right; but those fellows don't seem to be that kind."

The redcoats made their way up the mountainside and were met there by Dick and Bob, who chatted with the British officer, while the redcoats were engaged in the task of burying their dead comrades.

They talked in the most frank and friendly manner, and

the British officer was impressed with the good sense and manliness of the youths. When the wounded men had been lifted, and were being carried down the mountainside, the captain shook hands with Dick and Bob, and bade them good-by.

"While we will meet next as enemies," he said, grave "we part the best of friends. Good-by!"

"Good-by, captain," was the reply in chorus, and then the youths rejoined the "Liberty Boys" who had kept well back out of the way, but where they could be seen, so that the British might see that no attempt was being made to take advantage of them.

The "Liberty Boys" watched the British, and it was seen that they busied themselves making hammock ambulances by tying blankets between two horses, and when a sufficient number had been made the wounded men were placed in the ambulances and the entire force took its departure.

"Well, I guess they have gone back to Ninety-Six," said Dick.

"It looks that way," said Bob.

"Yes; and the question is, what shall we do next?"

"Let's stay in this part of the country a while," said Bob, "and see if we can't get a chance to make some more 'ten-strikes.'"

This seemed to be the wish of the majority of the youths, so Dick agreed to it. It was decided to make their headquarters on the top of the mountain, as here they would be safe from almost any force that might be sent against them. They went to work and made a good camp and settled down to stay a while.

While they were at work Dick heard a familiar voice and looked up to see Lucy Lockhart standing near. The girl was smiling and blushing somewhat, too, for she was aware that there were at least one hundred pairs of masculine eyes resting on her in admiration.

"Ah, Miss Lucy, is it you?" exclaimed Dick, leaping forward and seizing her hand. "I am so glad to see you, my own little sister."

"And I am glad to see you again, alive and well, Dick!" the girl said. "I heard the roar of the battle and I feared you might have been killed so as soon as I thought it safe to do so I came up here."

"I'm glad you did, for all my 'Liberty Boys' are here, Lucy, and—you know what I promised you. You are to have your pick of those who do not already have sweethearts."

"But maybe the one I would pick on would not be willing to have me, Dick?" with a smile.

"He'll have to have you; I'll thrash him within an inch of his life if he doesn't—but pshaw! what is the use of talking such nonsense as that? The trouble will be not that the one you pick will not want you, but that they will all want you."

"There you go, flattering, Dick!" giving his face a playful slap. "But don't you say a word to any of them. If none of them take a liking to me then I shall go without a sweetheart and will be happy in having found a brother," and the girl gave Dick a look which told how much she thought of him.

The youth introduced Lucy to the "Liberty Boys" and told them how she had saved his life, and they gave her three cheers and voted her the best, the bravest and sweetest girl in all the South.

Tom Randolph, a handsome, blue-eyed, curly-headed, jolly and good-hearted fellow, fell desperately in love with Lucy at once, and it was evident that the girl rather liked him also. Dick, who saw this, encouraged them, and, during the two weeks which the "Liberty Boys" spent in the vicinity, managed it so that they were thrown into each other's society a good deal, with the result that Tom

asked Lucy to be his wife, and she said she would as soon as he was through fighting for Independence.

The "Liberty Boys" had several encounters with Tories and with redecoats from Ninety-Six, during the two weeks they spent in the vicinity, and while they dealt the enemy some severe blows they did not, much to Bob's disappointment, succeed in scoring any more "ten-strikes."

THE END.

The next number (81) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' GRATITUDE, AND HOW THEY SHOWED IT," by Harry Moore.

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